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**California
Medicine**



EDITORIAL

Health Tips

MAN'S INNATE DESIRE to remain healthy, plus his curiosity about his own body and its functioning, make him what newspaper editors would call a "natural" for health articles.

Proof of his willingness to spend time reading articles about human health is found on all sides. Metropolitan newspapers almost without exception publish regular feature columns on health topics. Weekly and monthly magazines regularly number one or more health articles in their contents. Even the American Medical Association follows suit in *Today's Health*, a monthly magazine which is prepared by a staff of physicians and directed to the lay public as an authentic journal of health care topics with an authoritative background.

Until about three years ago, notably missing from the list of publications carrying articles or columns of this kind were the semi-weekly, weekly or semi-monthly newspapers, employee house organs and other publications with an interested but limited readership.

It was with just this group of publications that the California Medical Association's Commission on Community Health Services was concerned several years ago when it voted to establish *Health Tips* as a regular feature to be supplied to publishers.

The prospectus of the Commission was that

these articles be sent out each week to publishers who wished to receive them, that the items be medically accurate and presented in a way not to encourage self-medication or self-diagnosis.

Experience in the past three years has proved that many publications are eager to print this material, joining with the physicians of California in this gratis contribution to the health and well-being of the people of our state.

Popularity of these releases has been indicated promptly and directly in several cases, especially where readers are offered supporting material for the asking. For example, a column on first aid offering a chart which could be pasted inside a medicine cabinet drew thousands of requests. A more recent release on the dangers of skateboards—as used by youngsters enthusiastically, by some adults adventurously and by both perilously—was picked up by the press wire services and presented in all parts of the country. Just a month ago in an article on the steps to be taken by parents, by babysitters and by the parents of babysitters, an offer was made to supply some simple check sheets as guidelines to assure good care of children and a full understanding among all parties concerned in this twentieth century occupation. Requests for these sheets are still pouring in.

Interestingly, some large house organs regularly use our *Health Tips* columns. In some instances large employers or membership organizations have requested the preparation of "exclusive" columns aimed at their membership or employee groups. Where possible, such requests are met by the Commission on Community Health Services.

The business of preparing *Health Tips* articles is

a difficult and painstaking one. Each release must be grounded on the most up-to-date material available. Each must be checked and cross-checked for accuracy and unanimity of opinion in the medical profession. Each must be presented in a style that is readily understandable by the lay reader. Finally, each must provide that the reader be urged to seek professional counsel of a physician when the need is apparent.

This process requires an alert attitude on the part of staff personnel, plus a staff of writers who are aware of their responsibilities. Where competent writers were hard to find at the outset, a group has now been developed who have learned

how to combine scientific facts with an easy style of presentation.

Health Tips has established itself as a public service of the California Medical Association. In supplying this service, our association is prosecuting one of its constitutional purposes—"to promote . . . the protection of the public health." And it is doing so in a climate of friendly relations with an important element of the press which it might otherwise not have opportunity to know.

The Commission on Community Health Services is to be congratulated for adopting a good idea, turning out a good product and promoting it with intelligence.

